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AUSTRIAN POLICY
SINCE 1867

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GERMAN *Weltpolitik* can point to one notable achievement. It has succeeded in creating a community of interest between nations so alien from one another in sentiment and traditions as Great Britain and Serbia, Russia and Belgium, France and Japan.

War, like adversity, makes strange bedfellows. It also makes strange antagonists. Among the many seeming anomalies disclosed by the present state of European politics none is more startling than the spectacle of Great Britain at war with Austria-Hungary, a Power with whom she has been united for centuries by close ties of friendship and sympathy. In all the great struggles of modern times, against Louis XIV, the French Revolution, and Napoleon, Great Britain and Austria have co-operated towards the attainment of a common goal, the liberation of Europe. British and Austrian soldiers have fought side by side upon a hundred battle-fields, in Spain, in France, in the Netherlands, in Germany, and upon the shores of the Mediterranean and the Adriatic. There have been occasions when the relations between the two Powers have been strained, as for example when England lent her countenance to Frederick the Great, or again when Napoleon dragged unwilling Austria in his wake on the disastrous march to Moscow in 1812. But these were merely incidents such as may be expected to interrupt the harmony of any long friendship, whether between nations or individuals. Never until August 12

of this year have Great Britain and Austria been at open war.

My object in these few pages is to show how it has come about that Great Britain and Austria are ranged upon opposite sides in the present world-struggle, and why it is that Austria, who has fought so obstinately and honourably in the past to preserve the balance of power among the nations, should now be content to play a part—even if a subordinate and singularly ineffective one—in the great plot to reduce the whole of Europe under German domination. Austria's attitude at this crisis is not the outcome of natural perversity. Her statesmen are not, like those of her ally, animated by sentiments of hatred for Great Britain and France and for the ideals for which those countries stand. Her action is dictated rather by the instinct of self-preservation—in other words, by imperative considerations of policy. It is Austria's misfortune that these considerations of policy should have entangled her in hostility to the Triple Entente, and that the instinct of self-preservation should have impelled her towards a war which can scarcely end otherwise than in her ruin.

Austria's foreign policy differs from that of her neighbours in one important particular. To most great Powers the possession of a foreign policy is something in the nature of a luxury. Mr. Churchill once told us that the German fleet is a luxury: yet what is Germany's fleet but the symbol of her foreign policy, or at least of a very significant aspect of it? Weak States, such as Holland or Norway or Switzerland, dare not aspire to a foreign policy; some strong Powers, such as Russia, the United States, and Japan, can not only afford one, they are in a position to impart to it almost any orientation they please. Great Britain and Austria-

Hungary stand in a different category. The considerations which must govern Great Britain's foreign policy are dictated to her by her geographical position as an island, which makes it a condition of her security that no great military and potentially great naval Power shall be allowed to establish a supremacy over the rest of Europe. Austria's foreign policy is likewise imposed upon her by conditions over which she has no control—not indeed, like our own, by geography, but by ethnography; that is to say, by the racial composition of what Mr. Lloyd-George has bluntly called her 'ramshackle empire'.

The expression may be discourteous, but it is not inaccurate. Austria-Hungary is made up of a hotch-potch of peoples, inspired for the most part by warring traditions and ideals. Some indication of the complexity of Austria's internal problem is furnished by the recent action of the Grand Duke Nicholas, who caused the proclamation which he issued to the inhabitants of the Monarchy upon the entry of the Russian armies into Galicia to be printed in *eleven* different languages. It is not my purpose to dwell upon the geographical distribution and national peculiarities of each of the races to whom the Russian commander addressed his manifesto. It is enough to say that they group themselves into four families, the Germanic (or Austrian), the Magyar (or Hungarian), the Latin, and the Slavonic. Of the Germans and Magyars I need not speak: they constitute the ruling caste in Austria and Hungary respectively. The Latin family embraces at once the Italians of Trieste and the Trentino—the 'Italia Irredenta' of southern dreams—and the Rouman population of the south-eastern district of Hungary, known as Transylvania. The Slavs subdivide into

several minor sections, of which the only one which directly concerns us is the so-called Southern-Slav group, composed of the Serbs and Croatians, who occupy the whole south-western littoral of the Dual Monarchy from the frontiers of Italy to those of Serbia and Montenegro. It is the conflict of interests and of national aspirations between German and Magyar on the one side, and these Southern Slavs of Bosnia, Croatia, and Slavonia on the other, which has been made the immediate pretext of the present war.

This concentration of so many mutually antagonistic populations under a single sovereignty was held, until recently, to be for the advantage of all concerned. Austria-Hungary was regarded as an element of stability in the continental state-system, the removal of which must convert the whole of South-Eastern Europe into a 'battle-field for the kites and crows'. The famous saying, ascribed to Napoleon, 'If God did not exist it would be necessary to create Him', has been applied to the Empire of the Habsburgs, and represents what until but lately was the commonly accepted view amongst diplomatists. Such a view was justifiable in the days before the principle of Nationality had become a power in Europe: it is no longer tenable now that Germany and Italy have crystallized out of 'geographical expressions' into powerful States, and that a group of small but efficiently governed national kingdoms—Roumania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro—has fashioned itself out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. 'On the day when Europe imagines that she has solved the Eastern Question', wrote a French historian some years ago, 'she will inevitably find herself confronted by the Question of Austria;' and for Europe to-day the question of Austria is the

question of the destiny of her Slavonic races. A series of international crises, in each of which Austria has figured as the disturbing factor, had justified M. Sorel's prophecy even before the Dual Monarchy, in an evil hour for itself, lit the torch of the present conflagration. Austria-Hungary to-day stands no longer for peace, but for a sword. She has become the firebrand among the nations, whose extinction must be the indispensable preliminary to the restoration of tranquillity in Europe.

The Question of Austria, in its present acute form, dates from the conclusion of the *Ausgleich*, or Compromise, between Austria and Hungary in 1867—a year which may be taken as the starting-point of modern Habsburg history. The underlying principle of the *Ausgleich*, understanding of which is essential to the comprehension of Austria's foreign policy, was that in each of the two sections into which the Monarchy was henceforth to be divided, both in the Austrian Empire and in the Hungarian Kingdom, German and Magyar must be supreme over Latin and Slav. The spirit which animated both parties to the agreement may be gauged from a remark said to have been made by Count Beust to his Magyar colleague, 'Take care of your barbarians: we will take care of ours'. Hungarian statesmen stood in no need of such advice. The Magyars, in spite of their numerical insignificance, have always conceived their historical 'mission' to be that of a ruling race; they make fit allies for the Prussians, like whom they are accustomed to boast of the superiority of their national 'culture' over that of the surrounding peoples. The Magyarization of the Slavs, Roumans, and Italians has at all times represented the goal of Hungarian statesmanship, and

since 1867 the process has been carried to unexampled lengths. Unhappily for Magyar chauvinists, 'culture' provides but an inadequate substitute for numbers, and the broad fact remains, as a nightmare to German and Magyar alike, that the Slavs constitute a large and ever-increasing majority of the total population of the Habsburg Monarchy.

An internal situation such as this was bound to react unfavourably upon foreign relations. A programme of maintaining the Slav races in subjection at home involved, as its necessary corollary, the pursuit of an anti-Slav policy abroad. Other events contributed to the transition. Expelled from Italy by the loss of Lombardy and Venetia, and excluded from the new Germany which was born at Sadowa and Sedan, Austria found herself released from two embarrassing entanglements and thrown back upon a single line of expansion leading towards the Balkan Peninsula. Whether a policy of expansion was in the true interests of a State already composed of so many heterogeneous elements is open to question; but when the opportunity for putting it into execution arose out of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8 it was eagerly seized. Austria emerged from the Congress of Berlin armed with a mandate to occupy and administer, but not to annex, the Turkish provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and thus an additional million and a half of potentially disaffected Slavs were included among the subject races of the Monarchy.

Events have shown that the occupation of Bosnia was a fatal half-measure destined to compromise, perhaps irretrievably, the future of the Habsburg state. That Austria efficiently carried out the task entrusted to her is not now disputed. The disturbed

provinces were effectively 'pacified', western civilization was substituted for oriental anarchy, and the condition of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the date of their definite annexation in 1908 is a standing contradiction of Mr. Gladstone's Midlothian statement, 'There is not a spot upon the map of Europe where you can lay your finger and say, There Austria did good'. But, unfortunately for Austria, her victory for progress in Bosnia was won at the expense of the principle of nationality, and the Serb population of the occupied provinces, in spite of the undeniable material benefits conferred upon them by the change of government, have never become reconciled to Habsburg rule. Moreover, the vice of Austria's action in Bosnia lay deeper still. By the occupation of Turkish territory she assumed the rôle of a Balkan Power, and thereby brought herself into inevitable collision with Russia and with the immense moral forces of the Slav Revival which has resulted from the establishment of independent Slavonic kingdoms to the south of the Danube. Austria was consequently driven by the fear of Russia into the policy of the Triple Alliance, that is to say, into union with the two Powers who had so recently despoiled her—Germany and Italy. Germany and Austria guaranteed each other against the danger of attack from Russia, whilst the former Power also secured herself against the contingency of having to face France in a 'war of revenge' undertaken for the recovery of Alsace and Lorraine. Austria-Hungary could congratulate herself upon having provided for the moment against the 'Slav Peril'; but, on the other hand, the Triple Alliance was the first step along a path which was to lead directly to the subordination of Habsburg to Hohenzollern interests,

and indirectly to the unenviable situation in which the Dual Monarchy finds itself to-day.

[The reply to the Triple Alliance was the Dual Alliance between France and Russia, which, however, was not officially acknowledged until 1896. Both alliances at the outset represented purely defensive combinations; and for twenty years the peace of Europe rested upon a stable basis, for the excellent reason that there was no Power which had anything to gain by imperilling it. We have to remember that the German Empire of the early 'eighties was not the blundering and blustering bully it has since become: the chief anxiety of Bismarck was to retain and, as far as possible, to assimilate what had been gained during the war epoch which had closed in 1871. The days of William II and *Weltpolitik* were not yet. Russia, too, was a factor making for European peace. The Tsar's Government had been disillusioned by the recent trend of events in the Balkans, where its vast expenditure of blood and treasure had brought but little return. The young Balkan States were not slow to prove that they possessed aspirations of their own and that they were not minded to act as Russia's cats'-paws. Infant Bulgaria, in particular, 'astonished the world by her ingratitude': within five years of her creation she had broken away altogether from Russian tutelage. Roumania, too, irritated by the poor reward which she had received from Russia in return for the valuable aid she had rendered at Plevna, attached herself to the Triple Alliance—a policy which she continued to pursue until the morrow of the Balkan Wars in 1913. Thus for a quarter of a century after the Treaty of Berlin the political constellations in the Balkans were adverse to Russia and auspicious for the furtherance of Austrian interests.

In what did these interests consist? In the first place, it was absolutely vital to the integrity of the Monarchy that no strong and self-sufficing Slavonic State should be allowed to grow to maturity upon its southern frontier and to act as a magnet to the millions of discontented Slavs within its borders. Slav aspirations must not only be suppressed at home; they must be prevented from assuming alarming proportions anywhere within dangerous proximity of the Habsburg boundaries. In other words, the Balkan Peninsula, or at any rate that section of it to the west of a line drawn from Belgrade to Salonica, must constitute an Austrian, not a Russian, sphere of influence. Such a policy must obviously be directed in the first instance against Serbia, whose frontiers marched with those of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and who had acted as Russia's advance-guard in the war of 1877-8. Hence the immediate objective of Austrian statesmen was to maintain Serbia in a position of weakness, and at all costs to prevent the little inland state from uniting with the sister Serb principality of Montenegro and thereby obtaining access to the sea. If Serbia were once to succeed in 'opening a window upon the Adriatic', her economic dependence upon Austria would vanish, and her political emancipation from Habsburg pressure must speedily follow. It was partly with this object in view that Austria had obtained permission from the Powers at Berlin to occupy the region known as the Sanjak of Novi-Bazar, and thus, as a glance at the map will show, to drive a wedge between Montenegro and Serbia.

But there was also another reason why Austria was determined that Serbia should never obtain access to the sea. We have to remember that the Dual Monarchy

has insensibly allowed its rôle in the Triple Alliance to degenerate into that of a mere understudy of Germany—a 'brilliant second upon the duelling-ground', as Kaiser Wilhelm once described his ally in a testimonial which was read with undisguised mortification in Vienna. An integral factor in the German project of 'world dominion', which has been evolved at Berlin since the accession of Wilhelm II, is the 'peaceful penetration' of the Ottoman Empire and the extension of German influence through the Balkan Peninsula into Asia Minor and thence by the Bagdad Railway to the Indian Ocean. Austria's part in this grandiose scheme of creating 'a Germanic wedge reaching from Hamburg to the Persian Gulf' is to act as Germany's pioneer in the Balkans and to bear the standard of German 'culture' to the Aegean at Salonica. Now it is obvious that a unified Serb State stretching from Belgrade to the Adriatic must interpose an impassable barrier in the way of Austria's southward advance to the Aegean. Again, Serbia's expansion to the sea, whether by union with Montenegro or by the absorption of Albania, must introduce a new and dubious factor into the complicated problem of the Adriatic, and possibly result in the intrusion of Russian influence into waters which the statesmen of the Triple Alliance regard as an exclusively Austro-Italian preserve. It has always been an axiom with Habsburg diplomatists that in any disposition of the spoils of the Turkish Empire the Albanian coastline must fall into no other hands but their own. Hence has arisen at the same time a community and a conflict of interest between Austria and her Italian ally. Italy, like Austria, is resolved that Albania shall not be allowed to become a centre of Slav influence in the Adriatic :

but she is no less determined that when the time shall come for its allocation to one or other of the European Powers, that Power shall be none other than herself.

Austria's policy in the Balkans is that of the 'offensive-defensive': it is the evil heritage of the *Ausgleich*, which has placed the Dual Monarchy in the position of having to choose between an advance and a retreat which must jeopardize her ascendancy over her Slavonic subjects. Before 1908 it cannot be said that her policy was actually aggressive. Her interest was rather to preserve the *status quo* in the Balkans and to convert it to her own advantage by a policy of 'peaceful penetration'. Such a policy could only prosper so long as the Eastern Question was allowed to slumber: that is to say, so long as Russia abstained from pressing for a solution of those problems which had been shelved at the Congress of Berlin. Fortunately for Austria her rival displayed no anxiety to reopen the Eastern Question. Russia desired to have her hands free in Europe in order to prosecute schemes of aggrandizement in Asia, and thus until the close of the nineteenth century fortune continued to smile upon Habsburg projects. Roumania was openly sympathetic; Bulgaria, at least not hostile; whilst even Serbia, under the degraded rule of King Milan, seemed to acquiesce for a time in the Austrian policy of strangulation. The eclipse of Russian influence in the Balkans at this period is exemplified by the Tsar's famous toast to 'Montenegro, Russia's only sincere and faithful friend'. Austria's high-water mark was reached in 1903, when Russia, upon the eve of the outbreak of war with Japan, acquiesced in the famous Mürzsteg Agreement. The essence of the 'Mürzsteg Programme' was that Russia and Austria should supervise the execution of a joint scheme of reforms in the disturbed

province of Macedonia—in other words, that they should exercise a *condominium* in Turkey-in-Europe. Thus the influence of the Dual Monarchy was extended into a region whither it had never hitherto penetrated, and the dream of an ‘advance to Salonica’ had been brought appreciably nearer to fulfilment.

Five years later, in 1908, an Austrian statesman committed the egregious blunder of reopening the Eastern Question, and from that time onwards Habsburg influence in the Peninsula has waned. How Austria came to take a step so undoubtedly contrary to her interests requires explanation. In 1903 the throne of Serbia passed to the dynasty of the Karageorgevitches, and the Government of Belgrade, alienated by the economic hostility of Austria, which had culminated in 1905-6 in the ‘Pig War’, reverted to a Russophil policy. Meanwhile the political situation had altered, to the disadvantage of Germany and Austria, not only in the Balkans but in Europe at large. Russia emerged from the Japanese War weakened, it is true, in a military sense, but disgusted with Asiatic adventures and full of resentment against Germany, whom she suspected, not without reason, of having inveigled her into the Manchurian entanglement in order to ensure that her hands should be tied when the favourable moment should arrive for the crushing of France—necessarily the first item upon Germany’s programme of World-Dominion. The Tsar’s Government, accordingly, drew closer to Great Britain, with whom France was already united in the Entente Cordiale. In 1907 an Anglo-Russian Agreement was negotiated, and thus the Triple Entente came into being.

This modification of the European situation coincided with a change of personnel at Vienna. Two tragic

figures now invite our attention, those of Count Aehrenthal and the Archduke Francis Ferdinand. Both men have since died in the prime of life, and it is therefore impossible to speak with full knowledge of the ideals which inspired two of the most interesting personalities of recent history. Aehrenthal, who became Foreign Minister in 1906, is the less sympathetic figure of the two; he seems to have aspired to be the Bismarck of the Dual Monarchy, and it is possible that his projects extended even further and that he may have dreamed of transferring the centre of gravity of the Triple Alliance from Berlin to Vienna and Budapest. Austria, he held, should conduct a foreign policy worthy of her position as a Great Power: the Dual Monarchy should demonstrate to Europe that 'the old horse had life in him yet'. The immediate objective of Aehrenthal's 'forward policy', in the prosecution of which he could count upon the support of his ally, was to be revenged upon Russia for having emancipated herself from German influences and thrown in her lot with the Triple Entente. Where diplomacy had failed, recourse must be had to threats, and Russia must receive a check in the Balkans as an earnest of the consequences to be apprehended from the pursuit of an anti-German policy in Europe.

It is permissible to believe that Francis Ferdinand cherished other and more exalted ambitions. There is strong ground for thinking that the late heir-apparent had pondered, during long years of apprenticeship and self-effacement, over the problems which must some day confront him as Francis Joseph's successor, and that he had formed the opinion that a policy of maintaining the Slavs in perpetual subjection furnished but a slender guarantee for the future of an empire in which the Slav element was numerically preponderant. Francis

Ferdinand was accounted a 'dark horse' whilst he lived, and it may be that projects have been attributed to him which he never in fact entertained. However that may be, he was universally credited with the design of abolishing 'Dualism', and substituting what is known as 'Trialism' as the basis of the Habsburg state. The essence of this scheme lay in the consolidation of all the Serbo-Croatian provinces under Habsburg government into a single Southern-Slavonic kingdom strong enough to take its place by the side of Austria and Hungary in a composite monarchy, the framework of which would henceforth be triple, not dual. Southern Slav was to be admitted to equality with German and Magyar, and the policy of the *Ausgleich* reversed. Moreover, this national Slavonic kingdom might further serve as the nucleus of a still larger organism in which even those fragments of the Serb people at present independent might some day consent to be incorporated. The entire Serbo-Croatian race would thus attain to unity, but under the sceptre of the Habsburgs, not of the Karageorgevitches.

Up to a certain point the designs of Archduke and Foreign Minister ran parallel. Each involved the pursuit of a 'forward policy' in the Balkans and the resumption of Austria's 'march to Salonica'. Aehrenthal's first step towards the coveted goal was to take advantage of the Young Turk Revolution of July, 1908, to reopen the whole Eastern Question by decreeing the definitive annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Dual Monarchy. The immorality of Aehrenthal's action lay not in the annexation itself—Bosnia and Herzegovina had been Austrian territory in all but name for a generation, and there was no more ground for imagining that Austria would ever withdraw from them than for sup-

posing that Great Britain will ever voluntarily evacuate Egypt—but in the diplomatic chicanery by which it was accompanied. Austria cynically tore up the Treaty of Berlin and the more recent Münzsteg Agreement, Russia was shamelessly tricked, and the indignation of Great Britain and France was excited by the treatment meted out to Turkey. In Serbia and Montenegro Achrenthal's *coup* evoked a passionate outburst of resentment. So long as Bosnia-Herzegovina had remained even in name an integral part of the Turkish Empire the Serbs of the kingdom and the Principality had never renounced hope of some day effecting a union with their kinsfolk in the occupied provinces. Those hopes were now dashed to the ground. Serbia clamoured for war, Russia lodged an indignant protest, and the ferment in Belgrade and St. Petersburg spread to the Slavs of the Monarchy and awakened an echo even in distant Prague. For some weeks it seemed as if the great duel between Teuton and Slav was about to be decided by force of arms. But at the critical moment, in March, 1909, when war between Russia and Austria appeared to be a question of hours, Germany made her dramatic intervention at St. Petersburg, and the Tsar's Government, realizing that Russia had not yet sufficiently recovered from her Asiatic disasters to risk a rupture with her powerful neighbour, yielded to the threat of immediate hostilities. The Serb States, deserted by their protector, had no choice but to acquiesce in the apparent extinction of their hopes; and thus the crisis was for the moment averted.

It was merely a postponement. In reopening the Eastern Question Achrenthal had raised a spectre which Austrian diplomacy has since proved unable to lay. It was not to be expected that the Tsar would forget the

humiliation which he had suffered at the hands of Austria's 'ally in shining armour'; and from 1909 onwards Russia has been consciously preparing for the struggle which was plainly inevitable. For two years, however, the Balkan cauldron merely simmered, whilst Great Britain and Germany strove for the diplomatic mastery at Constantinople. Germany won the day, and the foreign policy of the Young Turks henceforward became more Germanophil even than that of Abdul Hamid himself. Meanwhile Italy was the next great Power to take advantage of the internal convulsions of the Turkish Empire. Profiting by the preoccupation of her German ally in the Morocco Question, she determined to press her own claims upon the Mediterranean seaboard of Africa; and in the autumn of 1911 she declared war upon Turkey and invaded Tripoli. We have the sanction of no less an authority than General Bernhardt for the statement that Italy's action in Tripoli was the outcome of 'an undisguised arrangement with Great Britain and France, in direct opposition to the interests of the Triple Alliance'. Germany was placed in a position of extreme difficulty between her obligations to her Italian 'ally' and to her Turkish friend; whilst at the same time the Turco-Italian conflict served to bring into prominence the acute rivalry which has always existed between Austrian and Italian interests in the Adriatic. The operations of the Italian fleet off the coasts of Albania brought the two allies, as Bernhardt confesses, 'to the brink of war'. Thus the first-fruits of Aehrenthal's annexation of Bosnia had been the estrangement of Italy, the resentment of Russia, and, most ominous of all, the consolidation of Slav sentiment throughout Eastern Europe.

The Turco-Italian War is one of the least interesting

in history ; but it must rank amongst the most momentous in its consequences, for it sounded the knell of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. The Tripolitan campaign had exposed the military impotence of Turkey and excited the cupidity of her Balkan neighbours at the same time that their indignation was kindled by the atrocities which disgraced the Young Turkish régime in Macedonia. During the winter of 1911-12 the Balkan League came into being, and the Slav States of the Peninsula agreed to sink their mutual jealousies and to make common cause against a common foe. Roumania alone preferred to stand outside the combination and to adhere, as in the past, to the Germanic interest. We know now that the idea of a Balkan League did not emanate, as was supposed at the time, from Russia, much less, as an imaginative American writer asserts, from the Powers of the Triple Alliance. The League was indigenous in its origin ; the initiative towards its formation was taken by the Balkan States themselves, in particular by Greece, and the credit for having contributed to bring the negotiations to a successful issue must be ascribed in large measure to an English journalist. At the same time the establishment of the League constituted a diplomatic triumph for Russia. To Austria, on the other hand, it was a stunning blow. Austria's attitude towards the Balkan kingdoms, as towards her own subject peoples, has always been dictated by the principle *divide et impera*—‘create dissensions, if you wish to rule’. Ever since 1867 Habsburg statesmen have lived in fear of the formation even of a single strong Slavonic state, let alone of a combination of such states, upon the frontiers of Hungary and Bosnia. The danger which Austria dreaded had at last become real. To such a pass had Aehrenthal's ‘forward policy’

brought the empire whose destinies had been entrusted to him.

But whilst the League was still in embryo Aehrenthal himself disappeared from the scene. He retired from office early in 1912, and his premature death followed shortly afterwards. If Aehrenthal may be regarded as the evil genius of Austria, his successor, Count Berchtold, has contrived to bring the Dual Monarchy apparently to the verge of ruin. It is true that the problem which confronted the new Foreign Minister was one of extreme difficulty—nay more, that it was one which probably did not admit of solution in a sense favourable to Habsburg interests. A brief campaign at the end of 1912 laid Turkey prostrate at the feet of the Allies, and Austria saw her interests threatened in almost every quarter of the Peninsula. It was not enough that Serbs and Montenegrins should have joined hands in the Sanjak, which had so long sundered them; worse than this, whilst the Montenegrins laid siege to Scutari, the metropolis of northern Albania, the Serbs penetrated further to the south and west and fought their way to the Adriatic at Durazzo. Austria's path to the Aegean was effectively closed, and Salonica itself, the goal of Habsburg ambitions in the Balkans, fell into the hands of the Greeks. To complete the discomfiture of Pan-German intriguers the Ottoman Empire, which had shown itself the willing tool of Hohenzollern and Habsburg, appeared to be fatally crippled, whilst the Dual Monarchy was faced by the peril of an aggrandized Serbia who might be suspected of the design to conduct a subversive nationalist propaganda amongst the Serbs of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The battle which Austrian statesmen had been waging for a generation was plainly lost; but it might

still be possible to save something from the *débâcle* and to obviate the most fatal effects of the catastrophe. The most immediately pressing need was that the Balkan League should be dissolved, and the newly-found unity of the Slav States shattered. Certain sacrifices, it is true, were inevitable; the Allies could not be altogether deprived of the fruits of victory. Austria had already withdrawn her troops from the Sanjak in 1909—a concession which her statesmen have never ceased to account unto themselves for righteousness: she now consented that the coveted province should be partitioned between Serbs and Montenegrins, and thus renounced, to all appearances, her programme of advance to the Aegean. But on the question of Scutari and Durazzo, Austria stood firm. Albania could not be allowed to become a Serbian, in other words a Russian, sphere of influence; if Serbia desired access to the sea she must find it through the Montenegrin port of Antivari. Since Albania could not be restored to Turkey, Albania must be constituted an independent State. The cry of 'Albania for the Albanians' was in reality the trump card in the diplomatic game. In proposing this solution, Austria would be able to count upon the diplomatic support of Italy, who was as much interested as herself in preventing the Adriatic seaboard from falling into the hands of a third party; whilst by insisting on the expulsion of the Serbians, Count Berchtold might even achieve the feat of 'killing two birds with a single stone'. Serbia, if forbidden to expand into Albania, would inevitably demand compensation in another quarter, and that other quarter could only be Macedonia, the lion's share of which her Bulgarian ally had already earmarked for herself. In other words, an opportunity

would be provided of driving a wedge between Serbia and Bulgaria, and perhaps of bringing about a total disruption of the League. It was even possible that Serbia and Bulgaria might actually go to war, and that the latter Power would pick Austria's chestnuts out of the fire for her by disposing of the Serbian bogey for good and all.

The scheme was Machiavellian, and it came within measurable distance of success. The Serbs were duly ejected from Durazzo, and the 'Powers', after much wrangling, recognized Albania as an independent State. The question of Scutari, however, brought Europe to the verge of war. King Nicholas pleaded hard for permission to keep his 'ewe lamb'; but Austria was adamant, Russia gave counsels of moderation, and ultimately the Montenegrins were induced to evacuate their conquest. Moreover, Count Berchtold succeeded in hitting the more distant mark at which he was aiming. Serbia demanded from her ally a larger share of Macedonia than had been assigned to her before the war; but Bulgaria, doubtless stiffened by Austrian backing, refused to abate one jot of her pretensions, and a rift was thus opened between Serbia and Greece on the one side and Bulgaria on the other. The Balkan League had crumbled to pieces.

Austrian diplomacy appeared to have scored an easy triumph, but as a matter of fact Count Berchtold had committed two mistakes. It was a cardinal error to stake the foreign policy of the Monarchy upon a very problematical victory for Bulgaria in the event of the quarrel between the Allies developing into an armed conflict. The Austrian Foreign Office seems to have been singularly ill-served during recent years by the General Staff: Austrian estimates of the value

of the armies of foreign Powers—and, indeed, of their own—have invariably been falsified by the event. Up to the last moment in 1912 Austrian military experts had clung to the delusion that the Turks would dispose of the armies of the Balkan League, and there can be no doubt that in 1913 Berchtold looked to Bulgaria, 'the Prussia of the Balkans', to make short work of the Serbs and Greeks. A scarcely less costly blunder was the alienation of Roumania. That little Latin State had proved herself in the past a valuable ally to the Dual Monarchy. She had abstained from throwing in her lot with the League in the days of its prosperity, and she now demanded from Bulgaria a slight rectification of frontier by way of 'compensation' for her neighbour's aggrandizement in Macedonia. It was natural that she should look to Austria to uphold her interests; but Count Berchtold displayed marked reluctance to put pressure upon a Government on whom he was relying to fight Austria's battle against the Serb peril, and thus Roumania's claims were only partially satisfied. Roumania bided her time, but she did not forget the slight.

Count Berchtold had alienated Roumania in order to conciliate Bulgaria. The extent of his miscalculations was soon apparent. Bulgaria, determined to prove herself 'the Prussia of the Balkans' in more senses than one, attacked her allies without any declaration of war. Roumania—undoubtedly with the connivance of Russia, who was not unwilling to see Bulgaria chastised for having allowed herself to be used as Austria's cat's-paw—threw her sword into the scale on the side of Serbia and Greece. A month's campaign (July, 1913) sufficed to bring the Allies within striking distance of Sofia, whilst the Turks took advantage of their late

adversary's embarrassment to recover Adrianople and part of Thrace. Count Berchtold realized, too late, that he had 'put his money on the wrong horse'. Roumania, not Bulgaria, was left the arbiter of the situation, and the Treaty of Bucharest embodied a settlement which coincided with the views of Roumanian diplomatists. Macedonia was partitioned in accordance with the aspirations of Serbs and Greeks, and a balance of power was established between the kingdoms of the Peninsula, amongst whom, however, Roumania was left with the determining voice. Serbia, so far from being crushed as Berchtold had anticipated, had emerged yet stronger and more self-confident from her second ordeal.

The situation created by the Treaty of Bucharest was one in which it was impossible for Austria to acquiesce indefinitely. Count Berchtold has since admitted to Sir Maurice de Bunsen that he regarded the settlement of 1913 as 'of a highly artificial character', and that 'he had never had much belief in its permanence'. The original Balkan League had vanished, but a new and more threatening confederacy had taken its place. The alliance of Roumania, Serbia, and Greece was distinctly more alarming to Austrian statesmen than the earlier combination of the latter two Powers with Bulgaria. Serbian and Bulgarian aspirations had clashed in Macedonia; whereas Serbia and Roumania possessed a genuine community of interest in their mutual concern for the future of the Serbs and Roumans still 'groaning beneath the Habsburg yoke'. It could hardly be doubted that this alliance, originally called into being to withstand Bulgaria's pretensions to the hegemony of the Balkans, must sooner or later come to be directed immediately against

the Dual Monarchy. Moreover, sundry developments in the spring of the present year tended to confirm Habsburg statesmen in the conviction which had long been growing, that Aehrenthal's precipitancy in reopening the Eastern Question had forged a knot which it was beyond the skill of mere diplomacy to untie. The visit of Nicholas II to Constanza showed that Russia was alive to the significance of the League, and that Roumania, so long regarded as an Austrian satellite, was steadily gravitating towards the Russian orbit. Again, Prince William's brief and burlesque career as the ruler of independent Albania had lasted long enough to emphasize the conflict between Austrian and Italian interests in the Adriatic. A prolongation of the experiment could scarcely fail to drive Italy into the hostile camp, especially since she, no less than Serbia and the sister Latin kingdom of Roumania, was vitally interested in the solution of the 'Austrian Question'. Most ominous of all, the growing ferment amongst the Slavs of the Monarchy, the inevitable and foreseen result of Serbia's aggrandizement, was already awakening an echo among the Roumans of Transylvania.

The 'Question of Austria', in a word, was growing ripe for solution. It was not to the interest of German and Magyar to delay the issue. Every year might be expected to see the Balkan League grow stronger, Russia more prepared, and the hostility of Italy more undisguised. Every day must bring the aged Francis Joseph closer to the tomb, and the crazy structure of which his personality constituted the chief cement, nearer to its inevitable collapse. War at no distant date was certain: it was well that it should come whilst Francis Joseph was still alive, whilst Italy and

Roumania might be regarded as possible neutrals, and before Serbia had recovered from two exhausting campaigns. And if Austria stood to gain by an immediate decision, still more was it to the interest of her ally to precipitate the crisis. If Germany must face the world in arms—an event which twenty years of a ‘Mailed Fist’ policy had rendered inevitable—it was clearly desirable to force matters to an issue before one partner to the Triplice had perished of internal combustion and the other had gone over to the enemy. What observers of Near Eastern politics had foreseen ever since the Eastern Question was reopened has come to pass. The emergence of the ‘Austrian Question’ and the danger of the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy have impelled the German military caste to a premature avowal of its plans. The Kaiser’s hand has been forced whilst the trump card of naval supremacy is still in his opponent’s possession. Germany, in a word, has chosen the ‘Day’, but the day which she has chosen is not the day which she would have chosen to choose.

Nothing save a pretext was wanting to plunge the world into war. At the psychological moment a *casus belli* was forthcoming in the assassination of Francis Ferdinand and his wife in the Bosnian capital on June 28—a crime which the Austro-Hungarian Government immediately attributed to Serbian conspirators. Who planned the murder of the Archduke we do not know, probably we shall never know; but we do know the value of the evidence which the statesmen of the Dual Monarchy did not scorn to bring forward upon the last occasion when the exigencies of their foreign policy rendered it desirable to frame an indictment against the Serbian people.¹ Speculation as to the responsibility for

¹ A detailed account of the Agram and Friedjung Trials of 1908–9

the deed is profitless : if we apply the motto *cui bono* ? we are forced to the conclusion that the most conflicting interests stood to profit by Francis Ferdinand's 'removal'. If the success of the Archduke's Trialist schemes would have imperilled the fulfilment of Serbian national aspirations, it is no less true that it would have sounded the death-knell of German and Magyar ascendancy within the Habsburg Monarchy. In any case it will perhaps be wise not to invest the murder of Francis Ferdinand with undue historical significance. Evidence is gradually accumulating to show that minute preparations for an immediate war were already in progress upon the side of Germany and Austria some days before the crime at Sarajevo.

There is a tendency in this country to distinguish between Germany and Austria, and to cast upon the former Power the sole responsibility for the present conflict. But it is not easy to see how Germany's ally can be exonerated. The terms of the Austrian note of July 23, a document surely unique amongst ultimatums, leave no room for doubt that Austria desired war with Serbia, and if war with Serbia, war with Russia ; for it is impossible to believe that Count Berchtold allowed himself to be deluded into imagining that Russia would sit still under another such humiliation as she had suffered in 1909. Nor can Austria's apologists plead that her statesmen exerted themselves in the smallest degree to avert the threatening conflagration. Austria's

may be found in *The Southern-Slav Question*, by Scotus Viator (R. W. Seton-Watson). The Friedjung Trial, the interest of which eclipses that of the Dreyfus Case, established the fact that the allegations upon which the projected Austrian declaration of war against Serbia in 1914 was to have been based were founded upon documents fabricated in the Austro-Hungarian Legation at Belgrade.

twelfth-hour repentance, to which the British Ambassador refers in his message of September 1 to Sir Edward Grey, is rendered suspect by the fact that the concessions which, according to Sir M. de Bunsen, 'might have saved Europe from one of the greatest calamities in history', were withheld until *after Germany had already dispatched her ultimatums to St. Petersburg and Paris*—in other words, until a pacific solution of the crisis had been rendered impossible. All the evidence goes to show that this is Austria's, no less than Germany's war.

Nevertheless it is possible to discriminate between the allies. Germany is animated by offensive, Austria-Hungary primarily by defensive ambitions. Government and people of the Dual Monarchy are alike convinced that they have no alternative save to subdue Serbia or sooner or later to submit to mutilation at her hands. Bernhardt's rallying-cry, *Weltmacht oder Niedergang*—'World-Dominion or Downfall'—is singularly appropriate to the position in which Germany and Austria stand to-day. Germany draws the sword inspired by a hope; Austria, haunted by a fear. Germany deems that the hour has struck to translate her vision of *Weltmacht* into substance; Austria trembles lest the war which she has provoked with the object of averting, may merely accelerate her inevitable *Niedergang*.

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